



HISTORY OF CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

In 1870, the first actions of the first Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors was to direct a seal to be created,

“to wit: a coal miner leaning on his pick under a pine tree with a flowing river at his feet.”

As depicted on the official seal of Chesterfield County, tribute is paid to the French Huguenot settlers who accidentally discovered very rich coal outcroppings on the banks of the James River near Manakin Town in the early 1700s.

While the first coal mined in Chesterfield County was for home or local use, there is a record of coal being mined in 1709 in Midlothian and sent elsewhere in the United States for use. This is the first record of any commercial mining in America. It is recorded in the will of Hannah Brumall Tulitt, that she left land at the coal pit on the headwaters of Falling Creek to the children of her brother, John Brumall. Other families began discovering coal on their land, and the search for coal quickly expanded to the underground mining of coal.

As a result of the commercialization of the Midlothian coal mines, other “firsts” occurred: Midlothian Turnpike, then known as the Manchester or Buckingham Road, was built in 1807 as the first toll road in Virginia. In 1831, the first railroad, the Midlothian to Manchester Railroad, was built from the mines to the James River so coal could be loaded on ships to be sent to New York, Philadelphia and other northern cities.

Coal mining operations continued through the Civil War, when coal was used in cannon casting at the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond and the Bellona Arsenal on Old Gun Road. Thomas Jefferson, while he was President of the United States, ordered coal from the Black Heath Pits for use at the White House, and surely was Chesterfield’s most prestigious customer.